

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation. It erodes the basic tenets of democracy and in essence blocks the First Amendment protection of "Free Speech" to allow such broad-based control of today's major "Free Speech" venue: the broadcast media. Variety and access unencumbered by such blatant political bias are necessary and fundamental aspects of our democracy in this day and age - if one position is aired in a political debate, others should be as well. For large corporate entities to override the spirit of First Amendment via their actions and directives is unfair and unjust, and should not be permitted. Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.